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CLEVELAND ADDS TWO SIGNIFICANT WORKS OF ART

Two major works of art have entered the collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art. Director Robert P. Bergman announces the purchases today, in a break with the Museum's tradition of holding back new accessions until all works acquired in a calendar year are exhibited together in the annual **Year in Review**.

The new works bring to their respective collections achievement of the highest order. A *Chinese Buddhist stele* (about 550-577 A.D.) enters the renowned collection of Chinese sculpture. Jasper Johns' *Usuyuki* (1977-78) is a monument in the growing collection of contemporary art.

The marble sculpture stele (h. 119 cm.) of a massive, almost free-standing image of the Buddha, flanked by his chief disciples and bodhisattvas--and on the reverse a pensive seated figure--is one of the most important Chinese sculptures to appear on the international market in many years. It is in extraordinary condition, retaining much of its original paint from the mid-6th century: red dominates, with pink, white, black, blue, green, burgundy, and yellow. During the brief, turbulent Northern Qi dynasty in China (550-577 A.D.), Buddhist thought offered worshipers a vivid promise of rebirth "in the company of the gods of paradise." Reborn souls are pictured on the lotus buds in the Buddha's halo, and the entire sculptural image refers to Buddhism as a religion of faith in the world to come. The sculpture completes a sequence of earlier Chinese stelae in the Museum, and as an intact group, offers a more complete context in which to place works from the Northern Qi dynasty already in the collection.

Usuyuki, which had been in the artist's collection and was exhibited in the 1988 Venice Biennale, was first shown here in the Japanese screen room with paintings and ceramics from the Museum's collection of Asian art. There it clearly echoed the rich inspiration Johns finds in Asian art. Now that the painting hangs in the new contemporary galleries, its abstract and mysterious qualities are as apparent as its Zen-like serenity. *Usuyuki* consists of three vertical canvases separated by wooden strips framed together as a horizontal triptych (89.2 x 143.9 cm.). Considered among his very best work of the past twenty years, the paintings, drawings, and prints based on this *Usuyuki* (and a vertical painting much like it) have no imagery at all.

A series of diagonal marks is laid across the picture surface in patterns that gradually emerge. Fifteen different units of patterns are wedged against one another in arrangements that Johns has created to evoke the path of spiral motion across a flat plane. Each unit of crosshatch strokes is made of strips of paper (cut from The New York Times) and covered with encaustic in flesh tones ranging from pink to gray. The diagram (below) identifies the units of patterns. The Museum is greatly enriched by this key work by one of the most serious and respected painters in the United States. Dr. Bergman says, "This superb work by one of the great masters of the second half of the twentieth century signals our commitment to build a collection of art of our time that matches the quality of our historic holdings."

G	H	I	L	J	K	N	O	M
D	E	F	I	G	H	K	L	J
A	B	C	F	D	E	H	I	G

Diagram of *Usuyuki*

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For additional information, photographs, color slides, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland OH 44106; 216/421-7340.